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INTRODUCTION

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is the governing body charged with determining basic policy and program for the Federation between Assemblies. At both of the meetings of the Council since the 1990 LWF restructuring there has been a serious effort to place the responsibilities of the Council within a substantive framework which can give direction to the life and work of the global communion of Lutheran churches.

At the 1991 meeting of the Council in Chicago, Illinois, United States of America, this was done in several ways. We have chosen in this LWF Documentation 30 to present two of the major presentations of the meeting, the address of the LWF President and the report of the LWF General Secretary. Additionally, this Documentation includes two statements of great, even historic, importance to the Federation dealing with the issue of "confessional integrity."

"Sent in the World": Function and Task of the Church Today, the address of Dr. Gottfried Brakemeier, LWF president, continues to explore the question of the "solidarity between the church and the world" as it was opened up at the Eighth Assembly of the Federation in 1990. The task of the church in the world today is seen by Brakemeier as giving "assistance to people in learning faith, love, and hope." The address is a challenging statement which sets mission, rooted in word and sacrament, within the plural contexts in which the church lives today.

For his report to the 1991 meeting of the Council, Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, LWF general secretary, chose the theme: **Church without Frontiers: Responsibility and Tasks of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation.** This presentation of the general secretary revolves around concrete issues facing the life of the Federation: the implementation of the new constitution adopted at the Eighth Assembly, the role of the Assembly in the LWF, immediate and long-term financial strategies, the necessity of fuller patterns of ecumenical cooperation in the future. This report aids considerably in seeing the ways in which the Federation makes possible increasing realization of "communion unquestioned."

This Documentation, finally, includes the two statements dealing with the matter of confessional integrity within the LWF. One of the signal actions of the 1991 meeting of the Council was to lift the suspension of membership imposed in 1984 on two churches in southern Africa. Those churches, which had allowed apartheid to characterize church life, have taken concrete measures toward the realization of communion with all sisters and brothers in Lutheran churches. **Confessional Integrity: A Report to the LWF General Secretary** was prepared after careful review and consultations in southern Africa by Dr. Ishmael Noko, director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development and Dr. Anza Lema, LWF associate general secretary. **Confessional Integrity: Remarks by the LWF General Secretary** was the statement to the Council in which the historic recommendation was made that the suspension of the membership of the two churches be lifted.

A careful reading and study of these four statements from the 1991 meeting of the LWF Council will enrich our understanding of and commitment to the life and work of the churches of the Lutheran communion throughout the world.

September 1991
Geneva, Switzerland

Norman A. Hjelm
Acting Deputy
General Secretary for Planning

"Sent in the World"

Function and Task of the Church Today

Address of Dr. Gottfried Brakemeier, LWF president

Introduction

It was with barely hidden pathos that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1970 chose the motto for its Fifth Assembly: "Sent into the World." The aim was to come closer to social realities and to attempt to change them. The Lutheran churches wanted to achieve a greater awareness of their responsibility toward the world and thus make up for a certain lack that had increasingly jeopardized their public image.

Two decades later this pathos has largely gone. This is not to say that the Assembly motto was without effect. On the contrary, it has played a decisive role in the history of the LWF. Along with other ecumenical impulses such as Liberation Theology that originated in Latin America, it has promoted Christian commitment to human need, it has practiced solidarity and raised the question of the political and structural origins of suffering. But the Messianic claim contained in the motto has reached a turning point. The being sent into the world has increasingly changed to an awareness of being sent in the world.

There was already some disenchantment before the Fifth Assembly when it became impossible to retain the envisaged venue of Porto Alegre. It seemed expedient to withdraw from the politically explosive context of Brazil with its human rights violations under a military dictatorship to quiet Evian situated on the Lake of Geneva. Was one not escaping from the very world into which one wanted to be sent? But neither was Evian a neutral place. It is part of the so-called First World with all the privileges that entails. Also Lutherans along with other confessional groups have had to recognize that the church is much more bound up with the world, its fears and weaknesses, its helplessness and guilt than is generally conceded. It is true that it brings a word and a sign from the outside. The gospel is the *verbum externum*. But never does it speak that word, never does it set that sign from some otherworldly standpoint, but rather by being deeply concerned with the present historical situation and under very human circumstances. In spite of all differences there is a profound solidarity between the church and the world.

To have consciously addressed this solidarity is the merit of the Eighth LWF Assembly in Curitiba. The option for the theme "I Have Heard the Cry of My People" shows the church under the cross as one that sympathizes with a church that does not have ready-made solutions, but rather recalls God's promise. The dimension of being sent is not abandoned. It cannot be overheard in the commitments contained in the Curitiba Message. But it remains within the scope of the solidarity that unites the church with the world, and which at the same time it owes to the world. The experience of the distress, the impotence, in short, the worldliness of the church seems to be more widely realized today than even a few years ago.

This means that once again the "world" has come into the church's field of vision—not merely as a frontier of mission but as an, in many respects, decisive context. This is true for Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike. Although in varying degrees, Christianity worldwide remembers and is aware of the contextuality of its witness, it cannot be denied that the world is made up of different worlds. Here secularism, there racism, here poverty, there abundance, here capitalist exploitation, there socialist mismanagement, here atheism, there fervent religiosity. Each one of these worlds, which may be quite close to one another, determines in its own way the thinking and acting of Christians, each one is confronted with special challenges, in each one the cry of the people of God has a different sound. The church cannot ignore these realities. But the more it addresses and struggles with them the more it risks conflict. The division of the one world into many, the plurality of sociopolitical conditions, and the coexistence of different cultures are serious challenges for the churches.

Given the multitude of contexts and the extremely burning problems of today, what is the one, unmistakable task of the church? Here, opinions diverge immensely. Can the context determine the agenda in each and every case? How does the church define its role in its struggle for peace, justice and the integrity of creation? Being sent in the world requires a new definition. What is the church's service in today's world? I would like to reflect briefly on that and in so doing not lose sight of the contextual perspective.

Role Crisis and Mission

The extent to which we tread on a minefield with this theme becomes quite manifest when the political action of the church is discussed. May the church be political? Quite frequently the answer is simply "yes" or "no" and the appropriate political responsibility is not even addressed. In general terms, one can say that on the one hand the competence of the church is reduced to the individual's relationship to God. Its realm of activities, it is said, are the people's existential needs and not their social and political concerns. Proclamation and the administration of the sacraments are supposed to be its main tasks. On the other hand, it is precisely the social element that is said to be the church's main field of interest. Along with the word, the church owes the world practical support. Its task, so it is claimed, is to be the pioneer of a better society, a society in which hope for the kingdom of God begins to be realized at least tentatively. With such a perspective it is not only the individual but also society at large that is subject to God's demands. Where is the border between truth and error? When does the church betray its Lord?

The church can be "restructured" at any time. This is one of the main dangers it has been exposed to over the centuries. It is being used to sustain moral concepts and ideologies, claims to power and structures. It is to give its blessings to human intention and activity and thus legitimize them to assure a clear conscience. On the other hand, it can be downgraded to being a religious association and finally a mere funeral parlor. Thus the church becomes superfluous. Psychotherapy, politics, religion or folklore can do without the church. It no longer plays a vital role. Instead of growing, it shrinks.

As this often corresponds to reality it is not in the least surprising that mission and evangelization have once again become a topic for discussion in the church. This subject is a focal point of this Council meeting. Of course, there might also be some external occasions for this, such as the 500th anniversary of the discovery, or rather

evangelization, of America next year. There is no doubt that the subject of mission has been neglected in recent times and that this is probably due to traumatic experiences of the past. Too often, mission and colonization were one and the same thing. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the true reason behind the renewed interest is the "role crisis" of the church, i.e., the lack of certainty concerning its task today. Is it to accommodate and try to address the different worlds? One thing is quite clear: without a direct connection with life the church becomes irrelevant and without ties to its tradition it loses its identity. Both are of equal importance and have to be kept in balance.

If all were clear in this respect mission would be no problem. However, empty church pews, decreasing membership figures and waning social influence speak a very different language. Not forgetting that there are churches with surprising missionary zeal it must be admitted that the so-called historical churches are on the defensive. The controversy surrounding the issue of what the church does and should do creates tensions and results in people leaving the church. Even though one likes to identify with certain actions of the church, one keeps one's distance from the church qua institution. Were it not so, the church would register considerable growth rates—which is not the case. Although success is hardly a sure sign for being in possession of the spirit the church should not be content with this. To reconsider mission and evangelization is part of the urgent task of our time.

It would be a misunderstanding if we were to see in this merely an institution's attempt to survive. By implication this is certainly so. But what is decisive is the actual cause the institution represents and advocates. This constitutes the *raison d'être* of the institution. What is this cause? Here we come back to the initial question concerning the task of the church in today's world. Without a clear understanding of this, mission is doomed to failure from the very beginning. Sent in the world—to what end?

To take up such a theme may appear somewhat presumptuous. Too much has already been written, the horizons are too broad. Moreover, there are a few basic facts; proclamation of the gospel, witness in word and deed, service to human beings and society still remain the task of the church. The church has not set its own task. It is given to it by the one who has called it to his service. I would like to refer to the contribution of the LWF to the understanding of mission which has appeared under the title "Together in God's Mission." It contains essential elements. Yet the topic has not been exhausted and must for the reasons given above be reconsidered every time. My reflections do not claim to be all-embracing or original. They examine the issue from a special angle and are intended only to make a contribution to a necessary debate.

My working hypothesis is that it is the church's task to give assistance to people in learning faith, love and hope. This is a huge program which encompasses both the welfare and salvation of humanity. For without faith, love and hope, human life is inconceivable. It loses its meaning and its backbone. Whether it will be possible to master the social challenges of the present time and to ban the dangers threatening the survival of humanity will depend on whether there is enough substance of faith, love and hope.

I shall argue this in the following. We must work on the assumption that the one must not be separated from the other. It is a matter of learning a way of life that can claim to be Christian only when it is taken for granted that faith, love and hope belong

together. Finally let me emphasize that I mentioned only the giving of assistance. The church cannot do more. For it does not rule over human beings and certainly not over God's spirit. Nevertheless such assistance is indispensable. It creates the conditions under which faith, love and hope can come about and thrive. In this very way the church is God's servant.

Necessary Learning Processes

Faith is considered as being old-fashioned. The sciences seem to be superior. It is considered a private matter and left to the individual's discretion. But this is no more than a façade. There is an embittered struggle concerning human beliefs. The mass media are full of it. We are in the area of ideological issues, notions of value and religious views. Power and privileges are at stake. Everybody knows: Those who have the people's faith have a stronger hold on them than any outer constraint.

Faith is one of the greatest forces in history. Ultimately what people do always corresponds to what they believe to be true. Ethics continue to be tied to dogmatics. Faith is a necessity. Everybody needs something in which they can trust, which they can defend as being valid and which they can consider to be meaningful. A human being without faith is sick. But it is not a matter of just any faith, but of the right one. Faith gone astray becomes dangerous and turns into fanaticism. The question is to what or whom faith gives priority. It is the question concerning God.

Modern atheism was not necessary to prove that speaking of God as the objective of faith is not a foregone conclusion. Even where the word is used most extensively, it quite often hides a false god. The real problem is not one of lack of faith, but of the wrong kind of faith which leads to doom. One of the most important tasks of the church is to test the faith of a certain time and a certain society, to question it and to examine its quality. This is what the New Testament calls the "distinction between spirits." Humanity's conflicts hide issues of faith that are spoken of only rarely. Talking about faith in the most comprehensive sense is one of the most urgent requirements to bridge the deep gaps dividing humanity.

Idols are recognized by their fruit. They lead to slavery and oppression, produce crime and violence. A misguided faith destroys life. What type of belief is behind the militarism of our time? And the economy, the meritocracy, North-South relations—on which type of faith are they based? Idols produce victims, make one blind, destroy the future and lead to a general frustration. God however gives freedom. Unlike the false gods, he is not of this world. We need God's transcendence in order not to destroy immanence or to perish through it. Without God there is no freedom, no real responsibility, no way out of the world. Only God gives us the faith that overcomes the world and at the same time enables us to serve in it.

"To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments" (Augsburg Confession, Article 5). The church's ministry means working toward the true faith and helping to practice it. The right faith is understood as being one which accepts life as a gift to be accounted for and knows how much human beings depend on mercy. Whether it was in the past, is in the present, or will be in the future, human beings owe their existence to God's unmerited goodness. This is the very essence of the gospel and in truth the only basis for a genuine life. Without the awareness of God's sustaining mercy, life itself becomes brutal. Thankfulness becomes a rare thing and the law of the fittest prevails. In biblical terms,

godlessness and mercilessness are almost one. In that respect, the terrifying extent of the suffering caused by guilt prevalent in our world makes manifest its being possessed by demonic powers. Although they wear contextual garb and appear in different guises in Latin America than for instance in North America their impact has international dimensions. The world perishes by its misguided faith.

We need a new "orthodoxy." It will differ from the old one by not consisting exclusively of doctrinal statements but, like faith itself, being in a connectedness with life in which truth turns out to be life sustaining. This is the truth, which is Jesus Christ himself. A praxis without faith loses direction; a faith without praxis becomes sterile. For this very reason the church's preaching ministry cannot be reduced to a merely verbal process. Since the very beginning, diakonia, that is to say Christian practice *per se*, has been part of the church's ministry. The learning of the faith needs both word and deed, doctrine and example, communication and sign.

Christian faith has its origin in the experience of God's mercy. Thus, it cannot but be operative in *love* and be outraged at the crimes committed in the world. It thus follows Christ's example.

Hence, to learn how to love means first of all to learn how to suffer. Nothing is worse than the kind of apathy that is not capable of either joy or sorrow. An indifferent person has sunk to the level of a machine. Ethical appeals no longer get through. In a certain way, the cross is part of love. Those who are no longer appalled by the fate of the street children in the metropolises of the "Third World" or the genocide of the Kurds—to name just these examples—have lost their humanity. Love is ready to accept suffering in order to overcome suffering. But it does not get stuck in sentimentality. What matters is what I *want* with regard to all others including my enemies. Love wants life. It insists on finding solutions which, if at all possible, remove the causes for the suffering. Therefore:

In a certain way Christian ethics is nothing but the logic of love. Love must think. It needs a theory of action and must reflect on a strategy which promises a maximum of success. It is imperative that social structures be included in love's rationalizing. Nothing can make the learning of love more difficult than institutionalized evil. We suffer from a lack of ethical awareness both individually and in the relationships of groups and peoples to one another.

In the first instance, love turns its attention to the underprivileged. The healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. Love will take sides with what is right against what is not. It will be in solidarity with the cry of the desperate. To do this it will have to come close to suffering. It will have to delve into each "context" without losing sight of the whole. Without being in touch with the reality of suffering there will not be true understanding. In any case, those whose life is most threatened should be the first targets of concern. Our world would be different if this principle of love were observed.

To set signs of love is one part of the church's mandate. It should be a place of mercy that dares to break through the harsh law of "works" and does not merely recognize the norm of achievement. Yet it is not only to set an example, but also to claim the rights that God has to his creation.

Humanity is not allowed arbitrariness and therefore the church must, for example, insist on justice. Goods must be distributed equitably to prevent some having too much, while others have too little. Life needs to be protected against violence and robbery, and precautions must be taken. Structures must be found guaranteeing these aims and thus serving peace. Hence a love that claims to be consistent cannot keep away from political matters. The church, it is true, must renounce worldly power and avoid political affiliation. Nevertheless, it must advocate the validity of ethical principles even in the public realm. It cannot remain silent in the face of political injustice.

Love, just like faith, must be learned. Without corresponding experiences there is no expectation of a normal life. What conditions need to be met so that people become capable of love, goodness and mercy? It is the task of the church to advocate among human beings the most noble of Jesus' commandments.

Without any doubt, the most difficult thing at the moment is the learning of *hope*. Surely this has to do with the lack of faith and love. Nevertheless, hope especially must be considered. To have expectations for the future, no matter how modest they may be, is an integral part of a healthy life. Fear of the future is dangerous. It provokes destructive reactions. The world has probably never been as hopeless as today. The continuing destruction of the environment, the growing gap between rich and poor, the renewed priority given to the production of arms heighten the mood of despair. We are shattered by humanity's folly which is unable to recognize that which brings about salvation. The slogan "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we'll die" is gaining popularity. An "après nous le déluge" mentality is prevalent which evades responsibility for the future. How can we convincingly argue for hope under these circumstances?

The gospel speaks of the resurrection of the dead and of the coming of God's kingdom in power and glory. This is anything but an outmoded notion. Both the individual and the world as a whole attain their final fulfillment only in the hereafter, with God. Once again we need the dimension of transcendence to preserve immanence. Any attempt to confine the entirety of human expectations within the bounds of this world would turn our earth into an immense battlefield. Each and everyone does their best to build their own kingdom of heaven, and that is something that is only possible at the expense of others. Renouncing ultimate fulfillment in this life is a prerequisite to being able to share thus leading to a communal and social existence. The expectation of the kingdom of God and the hope for resurrection as the otherworldly aim of all history are, in the most comprehensive sense, vital. They detach hope from human conditions, keep it awake even in the face of death and allow sobriety with regard to the possibility of life in this world.

However, we must not oppose otherworldly hope and hope in this world. Despite all discontinuity there is a strong connection between the first and the second creation, according to the Scriptures. The coming kingdom of God is to be prepared on earth, and spiritual renewal is manifest in a new change. Human beings and society are to convert and to become obedient to the will of God. This means, however, that even now just expectations are to be fulfilled. The Beatitudes with their promises do not only have the otherworldly reality in sight. The world is called to see that the hungry are fed, that those who weep can laugh again, that justice be done and fear be changed into confidence.

It is the church's task to set signs of hope by works of love and faith. It is no less its task to admonish society, to remove all that which turns hope into despair. We need future-oriented ethics that implement what common sense demands even though this may be unpopular and go against the interests of certain groups. It is imperative that war, for instance, should be banned forever and that issues of justice and the protection of the environment be given absolute priority. In these matters the church depends on the "cooperation" of society. But it cannot leave this cooperation to everyone's pleasure, and this out of love for God's endangered world. Without this commitment any words of hope, even that for a kingdom to come, lose credibility.

The Mission of the Church and its Context

We have said that it is the church's task to give assistance to people in learning faith, love and hope. The decisive "resource" here is God's Word and the sacraments. Without the proclamation of the gospel the church is pursuing another cause, not the one of its Lord. God himself awakens faith, strengthens love, gives reason for hope, and this at his own pleasure. No mission whatsoever can force success.

Nevertheless, it must not be overlooked that a learning process includes not only content and substance but also external circumstances, a sort of context. If this is ignored, all efforts are doomed to failure from the very beginning. This has been said repeatedly. Because learning entails experience, the external conditions of Christian praxis cannot be ignored. Some concluding remarks on this are as follows:

The first and most important prerequisite for learning faith, love and hope is the Christian *congregation*. As it sustains God's mission it is at the same time its "practice field." In its worship and its service (*diakonia*) it communicates those experiences that are inseparable from a Christian way of life. God calls his people, Christ constitutes his body, the Holy Spirit builds his temple. Thus the individual is integrated into a community which sustains her/him. For this reason, the building up of the congregation is a necessary part of all mission. This is true for all forms of congregation, from the house congregation to the church qua institution. In order for the congregation to serve Jesus Christ it must be created and equipped. In any case, being an essential prerequisite of Christian discipleship it requires considerable attention along with the gospel itself. Does the congregation fulfill its educational task?

The external conditions include the specific *context*. The circumstances and conditions, the political, social and cultural situation in which people live have a decisive influence on their thinking, feeling and acting. Contextual factors can hinder or promote the learning of faith, love and hope. Different priorities can be set in each case. But above all they vary the forms in which faith is actually expressed. The congregation must be able to accept the multitude of contextual aspects lest it will not reach people. Where misery reigns the preaching has to be different from the preaching in a luxury quarter, and cultural particularities must be respected. But plurality does not destroy unity provided the spirit is the same.

The church has the task of setting up parables for the kingdom of God. They may be quite different from the parables of Jesus. But they should reflect something of the future promise. Yet this will be the case only if the words and works of Christians flow from the source of the gospel and are the fruit of faith, love and hope, which we have learned with our master and Lord in the communion of the saints and through their modest help.

Church Without Frontiers

Responsibility and Tasks of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation

Report of Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, LWF general secretary

In preparing for this meeting in Chicago, I have been reminded of the many ways in which our member churches around the world are related to the Lutherans in the United States of America. There are ethnic, cultural and religious bonds which express the reality of the church as a community without frontiers. Alfred Hauge who in many of his books developed the theme of Norwegian immigration to this land in the last century described the poverty from which Norwegians fled, the loneliness and peril of their voyage, the pioneer spirit that prevailed through suffering in "the new world," their determination as they reached their destination and the triumph of their spirit as they built their simple homesteads on foreign soil. They brought their Bibles and hymnbooks along together with Luther's catechism. They built their chapels and schools, and very soon colleges and seminaries. The toil of their hands joined the exercise of their minds and the devotion of their spirit.

Years ago on May 17—the National Day of Norway—Alfred Hauge was the speaker of the day in Stavanger, a region from which the first ship of immigrants sailed for the promised land. His theme was "Norway is greater"—a triumphalistic and patriotic sounding theme, I thought. But as he developed it, he helped me to get a larger vision of the small nation into which I was born. He spoke of my country at the periphery of Europe: cold, infertile, inhospitable due to climate and geography and, with only 4 million inhabitants. Not much to talk about except among Norwegians! But then he lifted our vision to see beyond the borders—to the hundreds of thousands of settlers and their descendants in North America, to the sailors on the high seas, to the missionaries on every continent, to the development workers and to those who for other humanitarian or even selfish reasons had left their country. For each group he repeated: You see, Norway is greater!

Does not this vision apply to peoples of many nations who through adverse circumstances have been forced to flee their home and country, and seek refuge in unknown regions of the world, exchanging the misery of hunger or oppression at home for the adversity and sometimes hostility of a new cultural and social environment, but somehow with the promise of a better future? Many nations should be proud to see that they are indeed greater than their national borders by counting their millions beyond. And the people to whom they have come as strangers should remember that they also once were refugees or immigrants in a strange land.

At that time listening to the speech about a small but "great nation," I thought, "If this is true of a people like ours, how much more is it true of the people of God."

The vision of a *church without frontiers*, the people of God "from every tongue and tribe and nation" has been with me ever since. It has taken shape and gained strength as I have reflected on the nature and essence of the church as a communion, the church as the body of Christ and the church as God's people. In Curitiba the churches who are united in the LWF decided to call themselves a "communion." We captured the biblical vision of the church as greater than any single national entity and we covenanted to overcome national church limitations and to promote that universality or true catholicity which is essential to being God's church. In our new Constitution we expressed a biblical truth, and touched the hearts of many who are longing to see such a greater vision and global reality. Future generations of Lutherans will need to struggle to continue to translate that vision and its constitutional language into programs and relationships of churches in communion. Much has to be changed in our attitude toward each other, much in our ways of speaking and acting, many priorities have to be restated, and many commitments need to be reshaped. If today we begin to take seriously that the church is global, is universal, is without borders, is catholic, then it has an impact on how we live as local churches and how we relate to each other. If we have begun with a new sense of urgency and reality to say that we have been grafted into the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, then we also are making a powerful statement about confessional identity as something relative, which shall be transformed into and take shape in the reality of the universal church in God's time and hour. The Lutheran communion of which we speak is therefore a communion only *pars pro toto* as it expresses that greater communion into which we are born in the one baptism—one Baptism, one Lord, one Savior.

Curitiba and Canberra

A genuine word of appreciation should be spoken about the way the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) addressed the vision of the greater church when it met in Canberra in February this year. The assembly spoke in the same vein and with the same language as did our own Assembly in Curitiba, namely in the language of communion. This holds a great promise for the ecumenical movement. There is a growing convergence in ecclesiological reflection among all historic churches, including the Roman Catholic Church that could make communion become the key expression for Christian unity. Communion is more helpful, more dynamic, more theologically rich than the word unity. The Canberra meeting expressed its position in an Assembly statement, adopted and forwarded to the member churches under the heading "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia, Gift and Calling."¹ The following quote reflects contributions from the last years' Lutheran reflection on communion ecclesiology and deserves full and specific attention by our member churches and by all world confessional families. We might say that the voice on the unity of the church from our Assembly in Curitiba in 1990 was echoed and amplified by the WCC Assembly in 1991 in Canberra:

The unity of the church to which we are called is a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and recon-

¹ Signs of the Spirit, Official Report Seventh Assembly, WCC, IV. Para. 2.1 (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991)

ciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation.

The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. In such communion churches are bound in all aspects of their life together at all levels in confessing the one faith and engaging in worship and witness, deliberation and action.

The Canberra Assembly was pleased to note that since Vancouver relationships with Christian World Communions (CWC) have been marked by growing participation, mutual trust and closer cooperation. It was observed that the specific ecumenical tasks by the CWC are undertaken in relation to the broad ecumenical activities of the WCC as the partners seek to engage in programs of common ecumenical interest, sharing resources and avoiding duplication. In this context special mention was made of the relationship between the WCC and LWF as enhanced by regular consultations in the Ecumenical Center. This statement is especially appreciated and promising as it affirms a goal for which we have been striving but which we have not always felt to be reciprocated.

New LWF Constitution — Communion Unquestioned

The first important matter to be reported formally is simply that the new Constitution is in effect as of 10 February this year. Objections to a few points have been submitted by three member churches in Germany, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe. None of them have questioned the main principle and theological statement about the LWF as a communion. As a point of comparison we might recall that after the "pulpit and altar fellowship" clause was added to the Constitution in Budapest in 1984, six churches filed their objection, but they have continued within the LWF as active members except the Lutheran Church, Hong Kong Synod which in 1989 resigned from membership in the LWF because of this clause.

Officially we can therefore celebrate at this meeting the opening of an important chapter in the history of the LWF as a world confessional family and a remarkable event in the ecumenical movement. The coming into effect of the Constitution was reported in a letter to the member churches on 12 February 1991.

Member Churches, Council and Staff — A New Relationship

As we hold the Council meeting for the first time according to the new Constitution a major part of my report to you will be to discuss how you as a Council and we as staff could follow up the decisions of the Curitiba Assembly in regard to program, structure and finances and how we together can serve to implement that vision of a greater church.

In the Structure Report adopted by the Assembly there are words of wisdom for our guidance. I see it as my task to continue to hold us to that legacy created through such a lengthy process and "cleansed by fire" before reaching the level of consensus.

At this juncture in our appropriation of the organizational principles by which we are guided I would therefore like to quote at some length from the chapter "Principles for Structure" of the Structure Report:

1. There should be a clear emphasis on churches. The LWF is no longer a 'free association' which delegates certain activities to a joint agency; rather its member churches are moving toward even deeper commitments to one another.
2. Among the member churches, an inescapable interdependence and mutuality is called for, to be expressed as member churches freely share, in giving and receiving, their resources.
3. This vision of communion between member churches summons us to a deeper integrity in our relationships. Fully to participate in each other's lives requires that within the churches all forms of domination be overcome, whether of language, economic resource, culture, clergy, lay, sex, age, or theological and liturgical expression. What it means to affirm that all member churches share fully in the whole life of all the people of God needs to be given clearer expression.
4. The secretariat in Geneva exists to assist in implementing, facilitating, and making concrete the communion which now characterizes the relationships between member churches.
5. The decision-making process within the LWF must involve all the member churches. Decisions are not to proceed down to the member churches from some external point of authority.²

As we define the LWF as a communion of churches we must consider carefully various aspects of this important statement about our identity as an organization. The member churches are the constituent elements in the organization. The Secretariat in Geneva should direct its daily work, its programs for theological study, mission and development, world service and communication to better serve the member churches. Such programs as women in church and society, youth, and Christian education are support functions to the member churches and do not take on separate lives in an artificial Geneva environment. The activities, whether long-term development-oriented programs or programs for mission and evangelization, spring out of and reflect the needs and priorities of the member churches. Active involvement in ecumenical dialogues promotes that Christian unity to which all our member churches are committed by virtue of their adherence to the ecumenical and Lutheran confessions. And a vigorous program for emergency relief, refugees, peace, justice, human rights and an ecologically viable future for this planet reflects a growing concern and consensus of our global constituency.

In order to keep all these dimensions of our service on track and maintain the necessary determination and forward thrust, we must be very attentive to the ways and means by which the churches can hold ownership of and give direction to the programs.

² Report of the Executive Committee on LWF Restructuring, III. Principles for Structure, Paras. 16-20

Programmatic Follow-up of the Assembly

The member churches represented in the Assembly have indicated the general direction and issued specific requests as to how we should attempt to respond either collectively as a Federation or individually as member churches to the cries of the people in the coming years. At this meeting we need to become intentional about the programmatic impacts of the Curitiba Assembly for our work over the next five to six years.

As a follow-up to our initial discussion in this body last year in Geneva, we have turned to the member churches for some indication of how they implement the "Message" of the Curitiba Assembly. The impression varies, reflecting the local situation of the churches. Some are under great external pressures, finding themselves in such great political and social turmoil that they are only able to respond to the developments of each new day. Others are clearly not structured or equipped organizationally to deal with major documents from an Assembly. We are, however, encouraged to learn that the Curitiba Message is not regarded as the end of a period of work, but as giving impulses and indicating directions for the present and the future. It is heartening to see how much the Message reflects the agenda of many member churches. Some churches have had the ways and means to translate the Message, to deal with it in governing bodies and assemblies of the church and to distribute and interpret it widely. In other churches the impact is slower, but equally important, as those who participated in the Assembly continue to draw on the Message in their attempt to inspire believers to commit themselves anew to the local and global ministry of the church. Although we try to categorize the ills and needs out of which the people cry to God for help, these categories are not exclusive and should not be regarded in a schematic fashion. Rather they are indicative of a situation under which the greater part of humanity suffers and struggles. The commitments about God's response express a call to the churches to be an instrument through which God's love and care is heard, seen and felt. They call us to learn the theology and praxis of being local worldwide.

At this meeting we will go a step further and take a closer look at specific programmatic implications of the Curitiba Message.

A staff paper prepared by our colleagues in the Department for Theology and Studies, Dr. Götz Planer-Friedrich and Dr. Paul Rajashekar in cooperation with staff in other departments will help us focus on mission and evangelization. The time is right for such an emphasis since many churches and individuals have become weary and complacent about the Great Commission which Christ has given his church. We suffer a deficit in expressing a compassionate outreach with word and sacrament and in nurturing a spiritual life which fuels and upholds the whole body and machinery of the church. Chicago is the right context for this theme. The changing face of religious America, with all its demographic, social and cultural aspects, as well as the theological paradigms which divide American church life into ecumenical, socially oriented segments and evangelical individualistic forms of piety, is an exciting challenge for traditional Lutheran church life and mission strategy. The programmatic main thrust of our host church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been to express an evangelical outreach in a joyfully committed holistic mission. We are eager to catch a glimpse of that upsurge of mission and to be inspired and strengthened by it. As we devote the whole day tomorrow to the theme of mission and evangelization, we shall be

oriented by a search for a contemporary interpretation of the gospel, the actual mission situation of the churches, the local and global context. The purpose is to help us assess whether we as Lutheran churches are where we ought to be. Reports from all areas of our work provide you with the material for judging what we are doing together through the LWF.

Staff—and I believe also member churches and mission agencies—will be eagerly looking to the Council for direction in strengthening LWF engagement in mission and evangelization toward the end of this millennium. In that we join an ecumenical company of churches which has declared the last decade of this millennium a decade of evangelism, I believe that we want again to affirm a permanent calling of all the people of God not only to have God's saving Grace and God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ proclaimed, but personally to witness to them.

In following up the Assembly Message, we are also presenting a synopsis of all the departmental programs as they are impacted by our last Assembly, which was prepared by the interim deputy general secretary for planning. This overview is important not only because we are trying to summarize, systematize and concretize what the member churches gathered in Assembly want to see done, but also because it underlines the responsibility of the Council to hold ownership of the legacy of Curitiba. As we focused on the social, ethical mandate last year, and this year on mission and evangelization, it might be timely to zero in on the responsibility of the church for emergency relief and development at next year's Council meeting. By taking the approach of a thematic review at each Council meeting, we hope to be called constantly to account for what we are doing, to submit our programs and projects to a critical review and to be guided and directed by the Council.

Also in implementing the Curitiba legacy and in keeping with a decision of the Executive Committee in June 1990, an LWF delegation visited Israel and the Occupied Territories in March this year. The report from this delegation, led by Bishop Horst Hirschler will come before this Council for appropriate action.

The report and its recommendations should be seen as an attempt by the LWF to continue its constructive ministry for peace, justice and reconciliation also in this troubled region. The wider issue which transcends the immediate political situation of the region is how we as a Christian world communion can contribute to a greater understanding between the three monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In my view we should commit ourselves to an active and determined exploration with our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters of how our faith resources may be joined to save human life and preserve human values in this ancient cradle of humanity.

Reconsidering the Assembly Model

The constitution states that the "Lutheran World Federation shall exercise its functions through the Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat and appropriate instrumentalities of the member churches. In all these functions of the Federation, ordained and lay persons, men, women and youth shall be eligible to participate."³

I wish to briefly discuss some of the implications of this paragraph of the LWF Constitution for our responsibility as Council and staff.

³ LWF Constitution, VI. Organization

If the Assembly is the crucial point at which the will and vision of the member churches are to be articulated, we need to take a careful look at the nature and function of the Assembly. The Assembly is the principal authority of the LWF. It is responsible for the Constitution, gives general direction to the work of the Federation, elects the president and members of the Council and acts on the reports of the president, the general secretary and the treasurer. The Assembly shall normally be held every six years.⁴

Again the time is right. Worldwide church assemblies have been conducted on the same model for the last twenty years. Their ideal has been inclusiveness, participation of all groups and expression of all interests. Their working style has been modeled on group dynamics, celebration and one-issue phenomena. There is no question that this has enriched the life of the global church. It has expanded the agenda and enhanced the vitality of the Assemblies. There is no going back on such forms of corporate and individual expression of what the church is about. The time has however come to raise earnestly a widely felt concern about the constitutional responsibility of an Assembly. Is it still the place where the member churches are able to give direction to the work? The key question is *accountability*. Unless the Assembly speaks with responsibility *on behalf* of the member churches, we cannot expect these member churches to feel committed to Assembly agreements. It is important also to raise the question about the effectiveness of the present Assembly model, especially in view of the vast amount of preparatory material and its scant effect on the outcome of the Assembly itself.

In the same way as we have been led by a search for responsible decision-making procedures in the working style and model of the Council, the time has come for us to begin a discussion on how an Assembly may be shaped in order to reflect more adequately the role, responsibility and expectations of the member churches. The time is also right because there is a convergence within the world confessional families and in the WCC on the need for addressing this matter. I have participated directly or indirectly from all vantage points, as delegate, advisor or staff, in four WCC Assemblies and in the same number of LWF Assemblies. I am convinced that a new, more parliamentary way of holding church assemblies is called for. This need not, and should not, detract from the worship and celebration dimension of future assemblies. How could it be otherwise when the people of God gather to be equipped for the great mission entrusted to us? The convergence of an "assembly crisis" in the WCC and in the LWF should be seized as an opportunity to seek ways of joining an ecumenical assembly and an assembly of a world confessional family in the future.

Therefore it is timely at this meeting to establish a special committee to begin developing a viable model for future assemblies. Some of those participating will have attended both the LWF Assembly in Curitiba and the WCC Assembly in Canberra and may draw on experiences of various types of worldwide, regional and national assemblies, synod meetings and the Kirchentag.

The Council should be involved by receiving interim reports at each meeting until a proposal is presented in 1993. It is vital that member churches also participate in the entire reflection process. Communication must therefore be a priority. It would be my suggestion that a new assembly model be discussed and agreed upon in 1993 or 1994.

⁴ Ibid., VII. Assembly

In conjunction with the Council meeting at that time, which would be halfway to the next Assembly, I propose that a three-day meeting be held where all LWF member churches are represented at the highest level of leadership. This idea builds on the good experience we had with the joint meeting of the Commissions in 1987 and addresses the concern to broaden participation of the member churches in the life of the Federation. It also provides an opportunity to galvanize the communion of Lutheran churches for unity, mission and service. This would be a time for reaching consensus on the nature of the Assembly and on the general directions to be pursued as we move toward the next Assembly. It would be an occasion to test priorities and to provide for interaction, worship and inspiration.

Following this midterm meeting of the Council with other LWF church leaders, the member churches would have time to reflect on the proposal and, if accepted, to begin to change their attitudes and expectations in preparation for the next Assembly.

This leads me to discuss with you the time for the IXth Assembly of the LWF. The Constitution provides for an Assembly every six years "normally." I would propose that we consider the 50th anniversary of the LWF in 1997 as the appropriate time for the next Assembly. This would make sense programmatically and financially and could become an important occasion for reflecting on the past and future of the LWF. Perhaps from that vantage point we might look into a new century where future Assemblies are no longer demonstrations of confessional separateness but rather conciliar expressions of the ecumenical movement. A proposal for 1997 as the time for the next Assembly is before you with the understanding that the venue needs to be considered at a later date.

Strengthening the LWF as a Communion through Appropriate Regional and National Structures

As we discuss how to enhance participation of the member churches in the daily life of the LWF as a communion of churches we should momentarily return to the language of the Constitution concerning organization. As quoted above, Article VI speaks of the LWF exercising its functions through the Assembly, Council and Secretariat and *appropriate instrumentalities of the member churches*. This somewhat open formulation reflects the variety of structures and organization through which the member churches relate to the LWF. In some churches the LWF liaison is lodged directly in the bishops' or presidents' offices. Others have a separate office under a body with advisory or decision-making responsibility. There are twenty-three national committees which again are diverse in composition, function and staffing. And there are certain regional or subregional structures. Essential in the complex web of relationship between member churches and the LWF are also related agencies, mission societies and study centers. If we are becoming more intentional about the decisive role of the member churches and their agencies in shaping the daily life of the LWF, we need to have a closer look at these structures and test their adequacy.

Only national committees are specified in the Constitution where even this structure is made optional.

The LWF Constitution reads as follows:

The member churches in each country may constitute a National Committee to coordinate the relationships to the Federation.

The right of direct communication between the member churches and the LWF shall be retained. Each National Committee shall present to the Council an annual report on its activities.⁵

The form and function of national committees have been under constant review in the history of the LWF. Their important role in coordinating relationships between the Federation and a group of member churches is indispensable. Their role should rather be strengthened than weakened. This is borne out in the case of the ELCA where we must be frank and say that the new structure has not provided for similar involvement and active participation in the life of the LWF as did the structure of the predecessor churches. Especially for those churches privileged to be able to carry a greater part of the programmatic and financial responsibility for the ongoing work of the Federation, it is essential that there is a well organized structure that relates to the Geneva Secretariat. The problems which arise if a national structure lives "its own life" or becomes less enthusiastic about interpreting and advocating LWF concerns and programs, is not a structural problem in itself, but is rather one of relationships and even of personalities. This happens within churches as well as in the relationship between them.

Asymmetrical participation within the LWF which is reflected in the different size and strength of national committees sometimes contradicts our nature as a communion and therefore needs to be addressed in different ways as we move toward the future. Together with the revised Bylaws you have received some background material on this issue including a very helpful memorandum from former General Secretary, Dr. Carl Mau. He speaks from a generation of experience both from the point of view of Geneva and as a leader of a national committee. We should at this Council meeting not attempt to solve all the issues related to the role and nature of national committees. We may, however, want to start a consultation process involving member churches and national committees with different backgrounds. Again the aim must be to enhance the LWF as a communion and not to weaken it.

Emerging regional structures also need to be regarded with an open and positive mind. The Structure Report addressed this issue, calling for "intensified use of structures and programs already established by the LWF and/or its member churches" in various areas and called for "openness for the future development of both existing and new structures and programs as determined by the churches and, when appropriate, by the LWF Council."⁶ In this light we welcome especially the creation of a new subregional structure in southern Africa, under the name Lutheran Communion [of Churches] in Southern Africa (LUCSA) to replace the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa - FELCSA. It is most encouraging that this new initiative is an expression of healing, reconciliation and a determination to live together as a communion. The naming of this body as "Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa" is a bold expression of the theological vision of the Curitiba Assembly and a conscious move from federation to communion language.

5

Ibid., IX. National Committees

6 Structure Report, VIII. Regional Expressions of Communion, Para. 61

The Structure Report contains an important paragraph relevant to the question about regional instrumentalities:

Developments in various regions should be encouraged to proceed at their own pace but always in consultation with the member churches in the area and with an intent to form only necessary structures. The function of such units should be advisory and consultative, facilitating the involvement of member churches in the global task of the LWF as well as the involvement of the entire LWF in the life of the churches in the area. Thus they should be understood as serving the tasks of communication and interpretation as well as the creation and maintenance of channels for advice and consultation.⁷

It follows that greater attention should be paid in the future to enhancing the vitality of the communion by a network of interrelated structures which bring fresh blood and energy to the whole body.

The financial constraints of the present have made it impossible for staff to propose any form of regional offices to support these structures. This does however not imply that staff is neglecting this important provision of the Structure Report as adopted by the Assembly.

Finally in this section on how we might more effectively structure our life to increase the participation of each member church in the life of others through the LWF, let me mention staff visits to member churches and visits to Geneva by delegations, as well as conferences, consultations, exchange of letters and requests, continued counseling and follow-up on critical issues. These ways and means need to be emphasized and utilized more fully as they, in a unique way, bind together the members in the one body.

New Bylaws

At this meeting the Council will be expected to make a decision on the revision of the Bylaws, adjusting them to the new Constitution. The Standing Committee on Constitution held a meeting in Geneva 1-3 May to prepare a draft which is further elaborated during the meeting here in Chicago. The committee was assisted by two advisers, Ralston Deffenbaugh (United States of America) and Amani Mwenegoha (Tanzania). Staff work was provided by Anza Lema, Norman Hjelm and Claus Dölling. The Bylaws are an important document which spell out the rules for the work of the Federation. The Bylaws should stay within the parameters of the Constitution, should be concrete and practical and deal with matters of importance for the LWF and the member churches. They serve as an interpretation of the Constitution on points where this may be needed. The Bylaws are more flexible than the Constitution, but carry a level of high authority. They are presented to the member churches before taking effect. While maintaining the general content of the present Bylaws, the new draft adds legislation to such important areas as associate membership, suspension and the lifting of it, the nature and role of national committees and election procedures for a general secretary.

⁷ Ibid., VIII. Para. 62

Membership Issues

Conversations have been held with two churches who have expressed strong interest in "associate membership." The new Constitution provides for this development as follows:

The Lutheran World Federation may recognize as eligible to participate in the work of the Federation non-member churches, councils or congregations which accept the doctrinal basis set forth in Article II of this Constitution (Associate Membership). The granting, conditions and continuation of such recognition shall be governed by the Bylaws.⁸

The salient point here is that associate membership is open for those who accept the doctrinal basis of the LWF while not necessarily adopting the whole Constitution.

While we should welcome this opening and see it as a way for our member churches to grow together with other churches with whom we have the doctrinal basis in common but also with whom we share a commitment to mission and evangelization, we should beware not to make this an easy way to avoid the burdens and pains of living in a mutually committed relationship. By making associate membership possible, the LWF assumes the need for a continued theological dialogue on what communion implies. The conversations held in 1986-1989 between LWF and non-member Lutheran churches have contributed to this development.

Since my first report to the Executive Committee in Munich in 1986, every year we have discussed the suspension of two member churches, one in South Africa and one in Namibia, which was a decision by the LWF Assembly in Budapest in 1984.

At this meeting it is with a sense of deep fulfillment that I present a proposal that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) and the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (Namibia) be reinstated into full membership. This recommendation is based on extensive consultations with member churches in the region and on the report of a staff visit by Dr. Anza Lema and Dr. Ishmael Noko to the region earlier this year. Their report will come before you for appropriate action after discussion in the relevant program committee. The fact that the suspended "white" churches have joined the other LWF member churches in an organization under the name Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa may in itself be seen as the expression of the degree of unity needed to lift the suspension. It is my hope that an affirmative action may be taken by the Council on the basis of the positive staff report.

Staff-related Issues

Among the wealth of material which was prepared for this meeting, you will have read the reports of the directors, the associate and assistant general secretaries as well as the report of the treasurer and the interim finance director. Together with the other reports for the program committees, these documents present in my view not only an overwhelming array of activities, challenges and programs but they also testify to the

⁸ LWF Constitution, V. Membership and Other Forms of Affiliation

commitment and competence of a hard-working staff who at "seasonal peaks" such as project committee and council meetings are overburdened. It is my impression that we are making progress toward an improved inner coherence in our work, a more evident unity of purpose and a better cooperation and coordination.

The office of the deputy general secretary for planning which has *ad interim* been occupied by Norman Hjelm is indeed providing for a more confluent working style within the Secretariat. It will gradually overcome the separating walls of departmental configuration. We also see the emergence of a more vigorous overall planning exercise. Planning is a key to implementing the priorities and programs of the LWF in a coordinated way. As we develop this skill further I foresee an annual updated planning report to the Executive Committee for review and to the Council for approval. The gradual implementation of this office has released the general secretary to deal more with overall LWF policies and relationships to member churches and the ecumenical movement.

The creation of the position of Secretary for Council matters has also proven to be an important step forward. Since her appointment to this position Beate Fistarol has been responsible for coordination and production of documents and agenda preparation and has provided a smooth and efficient service to the Council. Combined with the function as Secretary to the Cabinet, this position brings together a plethora of information about the daily processes in the whole LWF Secretariat and makes it a switchboard which especially has supported the general secretary and the associate/deputy general secretaries in their responsibilities.

As the Secretariat gains experience with the workload of the various units within the new structure, it has become evident that some staffing adjustments need to be made. The Personnel Office and the Department of Mission and Development will be strengthened by one position each. Because of the financial limitations under which we work, this has to be achieved by relocating already existing positions and not by increasing the total number of employees.

Immediate and Long-term Financial Strategies

The financial situation of the LWF gives reason for serious discussion at this Council meeting. In spite of successfully reducing administrative costs by CHF 3 million through restructuring, we are faced with a new deficit which is not caused by unexpected costs but by reduced income. This situation is reflected also in our budget for 1992. The finance report will deal with this in detail. If we do reduce the number of staff further in order to deal with the immediate future, this must be combined with a decision by the Council as to which programs and functions should be eliminated. At this meeting you will also be asked to act on a proposal to deal with the financial strategy of the LWF on a long-term basis. By proposing a panel to look at the total financial strategy and viability of the LWF in the future, we are determined to proceed in a responsible and circumspect way. The result of that exercise will however not yield fruits until 1993 or 1994. In the meantime we must depend on the member churches to pay what it costs to run the present programs.

In my view the member churches have in the Secretariat and the programs an efficient tool for their global ministry which no one of them can do better alone or in purely bilateral relationships. Furthermore, the Secretariat is cost effective when compared to the member churches' own secretariats, programs and bilateral relations. The financial

situation of the LWF boils down to a question of priorities in our member churches. Is the global dimension of our ministry in theology, mission and evangelization in all their aspects, development, refugee work, emergency relief, justice and peace issues, worth the price or not? Or differently expressed, can the churches claim to be truly global in their ministry without the functions as expressed in secretariats and programs like that of the LWF? I think not. This is a matter for the Council not only to hear about, but to wrestle with and hopefully to accept as your urgent responsibility vis-à-vis the member churches and the Secretariat. Should we not affirm the independence of the role of the LWF in a statement to the member churches from this meeting?

Let me create no misunderstanding on this point. We are not speaking about whether there will be a communion of Lutheran churches in the future. I am raising here the question about *how* this communion can best continue to be expressed and served in a mutually committed structure which costs money and must be paid by the member churches. If we accept a principle which I believe to be both Christian and fair, namely that those who have been given more wealth should have more to share, then it seems to me that the heavier responsibility continues to rest on a few member churches. The issue, when it comes to sharing among the member churches the financial costs of the Secretariat and the programs of the LWF, should both be how much a church has of income and what it uses for its own and bilateral programs as compared with its support for the multilateral and global structures of the LWF.

There should be no doubt about the obligation of *all* member churches to shoulder together, according to their ability, the financial costs of the Secretariat and programs as decided by the Council on the mandate of the Assembly. We need a new awareness about this shared responsibility in our member churches. It is my hope that an appeal to this effect could come from this Council meeting. In addressing all member churches on this crucial issue of Christian stewardship we should seek encouragement and inspiration from the Epistle text for yesterday which spoke about how the little, beleaguered church in Macedonia became an example of Christian sharing. In spite of its weakness, its persecution and its poverty this church contributed to the Jerusalem collection for the needs of all the saints. St. Paul writes:

...for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means... (2 Cor. 8:2-3)

If we were to be led strictly by financial considerations at this meeting, we would not fill vacant positions in view of the budget deficit for 1992. But, if we were not to fill positions for theology and studies and other vital functions of the Secretariat, we would be undermining the very rationale for the type of secretariat and programs which we presently have by authorization of the member churches and the Assembly. It has been especially important for me to see that the Department for Theology and Studies be made fully operational by appointments at this meeting, given the pivotal role of theology in the life of the LWF. Other key positions, particularly at Cabinet level, need to be filled in order to maintain the momentum from the Assembly and to give a strong signal to the member churches about the intention of this Council to fulfill the mandate it has been given.

Toward Fuller Ecumenical Cooperation

As we look to the future, however, very serious consideration needs to be given to *alternative ways* of serving the Lutheran communion. We should for instance begin to discuss the possibility of a joint secretariat in Geneva for the ecumenical and confessional organizations. Also we need to discuss with our member churches and other ecumenical and confessional organizations the possibility of an independent ecumenical "world service," combining the functions of the present LWF World Service with that of, among others, the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service of the WCC. The proposed Ecumenical News Service is a step in this direction which, however, may need to await further internal readjustments within all involved organizations as well as a more convincing financial backing.

A parallel step should be taken vis-à-vis the WCC as it now finds itself in the throes of reducing staff and cutting programs, with an aim to bring closer the world confessional families to the secretariat and programs of the WCC. A tentative step could be to institutionalize meetings between the WCC General Secretary and the general secretaries or similar offices of world confessional families. Such regular meetings for consultation and common action would have a growth potential which could open venues for the joining of secretariats and program functions in the future. This is a model which would express the conciliar nature of the ecumenical movement in which the confessional world families are an integral part.

Concluding Remarks

I am aware of the fact that more than in previous reports, this year I have concentrated on organizational matters rather than on program areas. Reports from the various program directors and assistant general secretaries dealing with theology and studies, world service, mission and development, communication, ecumenical affairs and international affairs and human rights are however before you as an integral part of my report. You are invited to raise any issue you may wish from these reports in conjunction with discussion of my report. Otherwise these reports will be analyzed in the program committees before they come to the plenary for full discussion and action.

An important document for the Council to review and receive is the collection of public statements and letters in the area of international affairs and human rights made by the president and the general secretary in the period since our last meeting.

These reports and statements testify to the many ways in which the member churches of the LWF are present in the struggle of the people for salvation and human dignity and the ways in which the Geneva and field programs support this struggle. The disparity between the responsibilities entrusted to us and the resources made available can nowhere be as crippling and condemning as in this matter.

Let me conclude this report by paying tribute to our headquarters and field staff who have served the LWF Council and our member churches with great skill and dedication through a year of extreme challenge. The mention of such areas as Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Philippines, Bangladesh and India, Ethiopia and Sudan, Liberia and southern Africa, Central and Latin America brings to mind the complexity of our mission. Not one department or unit, not one program, not one field staff has

been untouched by the tremendous suffering nor by the never-ending hope of the millions of people in and outside our constituency worldwide. The reports from the directors bear witness of how a global church lives locally and how a local church serves and witnesses globally. Indeed the LWF is a dynamic expression of the church without frontiers.

With that affirmation, let us here in Chicago go boldly forward in the spirit of Curitiba and make the words of Canberra our own:

The Holy Spirit as promoter of *koinonia* (2 Cor. 13:13) gives to those who are still divided, the thirst and hunger for full communion. We remain restless until we grow together according to the wish and prayer of Christ that those who believe in him may be one (John 17:21). In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance, and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.⁹

⁹ Signs of the Spirit (see Note 1), IV. Para. 4.1

Confessional Integrity

A Report to the LWF General Secretary

This report concerns two churches in two countries which, up to 1990, were under the same political system. Since then, Namibia has become independent. Therefore, we are dealing with two suspended member churches in two different countries.

BACKGROUND

At the LWF's Sixth Assembly in Dar es Salaam in 1977, a statement on "Southern Africa: Confessional Integrity," based on the Lutheran confessional heritage (especially: Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X) contained the following special plea to the "white" churches in southern Africa as follows:

We especially appeal to our white member churches in southern Africa to recognize that the situation in southern Africa constitutes a *status confessionis*. This means that, on the basis of faith and in order to manifest the unity of the church, churches would publicly and unequivocally reject the existing apartheid system.¹

A similar appeal was made in Evian in 1970 and was followed up by the visit of an LWF delegation to the member churches in southern Africa in 1972.

The Pre-Assembly All Africa Lutheran Consultation, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1983, carefully and prayerfully reviewed the situation since the 1970 and 1977 LWF Assemblies and recommended to the Seventh Assembly in Budapest that:

the Seventh Assembly reaffirm the Dar es Salaam statement on *status confessionis* and call upon the "white" member churches in South Africa and Namibia to take positive steps toward church unity; and

that, as an interim measure, the "white" member churches be suspended from LWF membership until such time as they reject apartheid publicly and unequivocally and move toward unity with other member churches in the area.

After a lengthy open hearing at which all parties concerned had the opportunity to present their points of view, the LWF's Seventh Assembly in Budapest, 1984, adopted

¹ Dar es Salaam 1977: Sixth LWF Assembly, *In Christ—a New Community*, p. 180

the following statement:

The Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, having studied and heard extensive reports regarding the situation in southern Africa:

1. REAFFIRMS the resolution of the Sixth Assembly (Dar es Salaam 1977) on Southern Africa: Confessional Integrity.
2. STRONGLY AND URGENTLY APPEALS to its white member churches in southern Africa, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) and the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in South-West Africa (Namibia) to publicly and unequivocally reject the system of apartheid (separate development) and to end the division of the church on racial grounds.
3. Regretfully concluding that no satisfactory fulfillment of this goal has as yet been achieved, FINDS that those churches have in fact withdrawn from the confessional community that forms the basis of membership in the Lutheran World Federation. Therefore, the Assembly is constrained to SUSPEND THE MEMBERSHIP of the above churches, intending that such action serve as a help for those churches to come to clear witness against the policy of apartheid (separate development) and to move to visible unity of the Lutheran churches in southern Africa.
4. UNDERSTANDS that suspension means that those churches are not entitled to send voting delegates to an LWF Assembly or official meeting, nor to have any of their members on a governing organ of the Federation.
5. INSTRUCTS the Executive Committee to lift this suspension if satisfactory actions are taken by the churches involved to establish the legal and practical conditions for abolishing the practice of apartheid in the life of the churches and their congregations.
6. OFFERS the Lutheran churches in southern Africa every support and assistance as they seek to witness to the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ and move to visible unity. Such support and assistance should include the following:
 - a) A visit of a delegation of the Federation to counsel with and encourage the Lutheran churches of southern Africa.
 - b) Encouraging other regular visits to the churches by other member churches and the Federation.
 - c) Continued appeal to member churches around the world to support all Lutheran churches and all churches in southern Africa in prayer.

- d) Continued commitment to strong advocacy on the part of the LWF and its member churches, seeking to support peaceful and positive change toward the equality of all people in the societies of southern Africa.
- 7. ENCOURAGES all member churches to engage in ongoing self-examination in the light of Scripture, rejecting all forms of racial discrimination.²

In addition to the above statement, the Seventh Assembly adopted several resolutions on racism in church and society and in the LWF and the member churches, among which were:

- 10.1 To instruct the LWF Executive Committee to cooperate with the member churches in Namibia and in South Africa in providing all possible support to those individuals in the white churches who have worked and continue to work for positive change in their church bodies....
- 10.3 To call upon those LWF member churches that provide financial and personnel support to the suspended white churches in Namibia and in South Africa...to reconsider the agreements with these churches and either to suspend such support through an appropriate process or to find ways to assure that such support in no way assists those churches to continue to resist the change called for....
- 10.4 To ask the LWF member churches in the area, as well as those supporting from the rest of the world, to report annually to the LWF Executive Committee on progress toward these ends and, should there be no positive movement on behalf of the white churches by January 1987, to request these supporting churches to terminate all financial and personnel support from that date on.
- 10.5 To urge the other LWF member churches in South Africa and Namibia to remember these suspended churches in their prayers, continuing to welcome their members and congregations into the fellowship of the Lutheran churches in Namibia and South Africa and offering to provide financial and personnel resources to those suspended churches as they are prepared to accept them.
- 10.6 To urge all LWF member churches to take visible and concrete steps, including boycott of goods and withdrawal of investments, to end all economic and cultural support of apartheid...until such time as apartheid is totally dismantled.

² Budapest 1984: LWF Seventh Assembly, LWF Report 19/20, p. 179-180

- 10.7 To ask each LWF member church to actively oppose all forms of racism in its own life....
- 10.8 To ask each LWF member church to take action to remove all vestiges of institutional racism from their structures, reporting to the LWF Executive Committee on these efforts by January 1988....³

FOLLOW-UP OF THE SEVENTH ASSEMBLY ACTIONS ON SUSPENSION

In 1986, Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, LWF general secretary, visited South Africa and Namibia in follow-up of the Budapest Assembly resolutions related to the unity and witness of the member churches and suspended churches in the area. He presented a lengthy report on his visit to the meeting of the LWF Executive Committee in July 1986 in Munich.

On the basis of the general secretary's report, itself a response to Budapest Resolution 10.4 (see p. 31), the July 1986 Executive Committee recommended that:

the Executive Committee...convene a review conference on the suspension issue prior to December 31, 1986...for the purpose of:

- evaluating whether or not there has been evidence of a positive development in response to Assembly Resolution 10.4;
- reporting to the general secretary of the LWF with the view of informing his recommendation to the 1987 meeting of the Executive Committee (first meeting of the Executive Committee following the January 1987 deadline stipulated in Assembly Resolution 10.4); and
- suggesting ways of strengthening the unity process in southern Africa in response to Assembly Resolution 10.6.⁴

In response to the above recommendation, a **Review Conference on Southern Africa** was held in November 1986 in Hannover, Federal Republic of Germany, under the sponsorship of the LWF and was attended by six LWF member churches from South Africa and Namibia, Executive Committee members, the German National Committee, Evangelical Church in Germany and LWF staff.

The conference concluded that while there had been a rejection of apartheid through official church statements, there had been very little movement to end the daily reality of apartheid within either church or society. Additionally, there was welcome evidence of movement toward unity by the church leadership, but the unity process had not become apparent in the life of the congregations.

The conference made several recommendations, including the possibility of a pastoral delegation to the churches in South Africa and Namibia before the 1987 Executive Committee.

³ Ibid., p. 245-246

⁴ Munich 1986: LWF Executive Committee, Minutes, Exhibit 19.3.4

The July 1987 LWF Executive Committee, meeting in Viborg, Denmark, voted not to ask the overseas partners of the suspended churches to terminate all financial and personnel support, but expressed concern that all agencies and churches work together toward the common goal of expressing visibly the unity of the church and purging all vestiges of apartheid from the life of church and society in South Africa and Namibia.

The Executive Committee encouraged white churches to show solidarity with "black" churches in their struggle for human rights, both black and white churches to continue steps for unity, the holding of all congregational activities on an interracial basis, and so forth. Additionally, the LWF General Secretary was asked to arrange a pastoral delegation to the churches in Namibia and South Africa.

Attempts were made to have a pastoral delegation visit the suspended churches in South Africa and Namibia in the latter half of 1987. However, after having invited the delegation, together with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in South-West Africa/Namibia (UELCSWA) partner churches, the synod of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (DELK) decided neither to invite nor to receive the LWF's pastoral delegation. (This action was later seen to be a unilateral decision of the Landesprotest [regional dean] rather than a formal decision of the synod.) Additionally, the DELK Synod decided to terminate its membership in the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN). Finally, it resolved to remain in the LWF, but to suspend formal discussion of the suspension issue.⁵

An April 1988 meeting with overseas partners of the two suspended churches took place at the church office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), as per request of the 1987 Executive Committee meeting. A report from the meeting was submitted to the 1988 meeting of the Executive Committee.

The June/July 1988 LWF Executive Committee, meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, noted that little progress had been made to comply with the conditions set by the Seventh Assembly for lifting the suspension of the two white member churches in southern Africa and that actions taken by DELK had aggravated the situation. The Executive Committee felt that evidence was growing to justify a final implementation of the Assembly resolution to call on overseas partners to terminate their assistance to the suspended churches. However, it was of the opinion that the pastoral visit of an LWF delegation, foreseen in its 1987 Viborg resolution, should take place as a last means of trying to reach a positive solution.⁶

PASTORAL DELEGATIONS TO SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA

As can be seen above, pastoral delegations to South Africa and Namibia were encouraged on several occasions and attempts made to organize such visits. In March 1989 pastoral delegations did visit both South Africa and Namibia.

⁵ Viborg 1987: LWF Executive Committee, Minutes, p. 24-27

⁶ Addis Ababa 1988: LWF Executive Committee, Minutes, p. 17-19

SOUTH AFRICA

The pastoral delegation, consisting of Executive Committee members David W. Preus and Karsten Nissen, and Margaretha Ringström, director of Swedish Church Aid, to Lutheran churches in South Africa took place 3-10 March 1989. Following intense discussions with a broad representation of church members from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) (ELCSA-CC), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal) (ELCSA-N-T), the delegation made the following observations:

- The ELCSA-CC's 1986 assembly, by more than a two-thirds majority, adopted a message to the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa's (UELCSA) congregations repenting past support for apartheid and calling for the "total abolition of apartheid."
- The ELCSA-CC's assembly, with delegates from all Cape Church congregations, has committed the church to union with the ELCSA and shares fully in the Unity Commission formed by the churches to accomplish that goal.
- The ELCSA, ELCSA-CC and ELCSA-N-T church leaders and Unity Commission members have expressed their confidence in each other's openness, seriousness and commitment to the unity of the Lutheran churches involved.
- There are increasing, though yet too few, unity expressions in local ELCSA and UELCSA congregations through shared pulpit and altar fellowship, pastoral conferences, Bible and other study groups, women's fellowship and service groups, youth exchanges, and acceptance of the commitment to unity adopted at synod conventions.

In light of the above observations, the pastoral delegation recommended that:

the LWF suspension of the ELCSA-CC be lifted; and that

the LWF offer encouragement and assistance to the Cape Church and its partners in their efforts to help abolish apartheid and its effects and in their efforts to unite the churches.

NAMIBIA

The pastoral delegation, consisting of Ms. Susannah Telewoda, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Soritua Nababan, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Andreas Aarflot and the Rev. Dr. Paul Wee, visited Namibia 2-10 March 1989. The Rt. Rev. Jonas C. Shiri did not participate as he was not granted a visa. Since all inter-Lutheran activities through the UELCSWA/Namibia were suspended in September/October 1987, a common invitation to the LWF to send a delegation was not received. Each church issued individual letters of invitation. Because of lack of time, it became necessary to split the team to allow greater exposure to congregational life.

Among the delegation's observations with respect to the question of progress with the DELK on abolishing racial division within church and society and expressing the unity of the church across racial lines were that:

- The DELK had reconfirmed its position rejecting the apartheid system of racial separation in theory and practice.
- The DELK continues to pursue a policy of ordaining indigenous, i.e. Namibian born, pastors and training them at integrated theological schools in southern Africa.
- The DELK's leadership was seriously reconsidering membership in the CCN.
- The DELK clearly wished the UELCSWA to lift the discontinuation of activities between black and white congregations, imposed in 1987 following the DELK's withdrawal from the CCN.
- The DELK favors a renewal of full fellowship in the LWF.
- The DELK leaders expressed a desire to continue talks with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South-West Africa/Namibia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia with the eventual goal of unity among all Lutheran churches in Namibia.
- The DELK leadership clearly reversed the 1987 decisions not to invite an LWF pastoral delegation or to discuss the suspension issue.

On the basis of the findings resulting from its intensive discussions and observations, the pastoral delegation found it necessary to conclude that it was not in a position to make a definitive recommendation to the Executive Committee as to whether or not the suspension action of the Budapest Assembly directed toward the DELK should be lifted.

At its July/August 1989 Geneva meeting, the Executive Committee reviewed the LWF follow-up of the Budapest decision and considered to what extent conditions for lifting the suspension had been met by the two suspended churches. It was agreed that the suspended churches had stated their public rejection of the apartheid system and their commitment to the establishment of Lutheran unity across racial lines. However, the majority was of the opinion that a final decision on lifting the suspension would have to await more substantial documentation on the ways in which the practical conditions of apartheid were being abolished in the life of the churches and the congregations. The Executive Committee voted to ask staff to continue to follow developments relating to this issue.⁷

At the Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, January/February 1990, the general secretary reviewed the situation since the Budapest Assembly. The Assembly voted to accept the general secretary's recommendation that no action be taken at the Assembly, but that the suspension question be referred for appropriate action to the next meeting of the LWF Executive Committee/Council.⁸

⁷ Geneva 1989: LWF Executive Committee, Minutes, p. 19

⁸ Curitiba 1990: LWF Eighth Assembly, Minutes, p. 67

At its meeting in June 1990, the Executive Committee/Council voted that:

the LWF, in pursuit of its goal to lift the suspension action at the earliest possible time, actively maintain its pastoral support of the churches of South Africa and Namibia, encouraging and assisting them in ways they consider most helpful in building genuine communities of faith and life across racial lines.

It was further voted that:

the Council be informed at its next meeting on concrete steps undertaken toward a possible lifting of the suspension.⁹

STAFF VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA (6-10 MAY 1991)

In line with the recommendations of the 1990 Executive Committee/Council meeting to actively maintain pastoral support, the general secretary sent a staff team, consisting of Dr. Anza Lema, associate general secretary, and Dr. Ishmael Noko, director of the Department for Mission and Development, to South Africa and Namibia for discussions with the suspended churches and other member churches in the region.

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church)

The church's delegation consisted of:

Bishop Nils Rohwer
Professor Reino Ottermann, synod president of the Cape Church
Rev. Gerhard Plüddemann, church council member
Mr. Reinhard Spitzner, treasurer of the Cape Church

They gave an overview of the church from 1961 to the present. The ELCSA-CC came into being through a unity process that brought together various independent congregations of German-speaking people. These congregations are scattered throughout the Cape Province with huge distances between them. Structurally, the ELCSA-CC (this also applies to the ELCSA-N-T) is congregational. The autonomy of each congregation is protected by the constitution of the church. Neither the church council nor the bishop can force decisions upon the congregations. Pastors are called by the congregations and are not appointed by the bishop. The bishop's authority, therefore, is limited.

As already mentioned in the observations of the 1989 pastoral delegation, the ELCSA-CC is engaged together with the ELCSA-N-T and ELCSA in unity talks. The staff

⁹ Geneva 1990: LWF Executive Committee, Minutes, p. 24

delegation heard the following statements from the ELCSA-CC:

- The ELCSA-CC's constitution has never had a "race clause," i.e. a constitutional provision that denies membership to individuals on the basis of their color. By definition, therefore, everybody can become a member of the ELCSA-CC, irrespective of their color. However, to become a member of the church, one has to be a member of one of the congregations. The congregations and the pastors have the autonomy to decide on who may or may not be a member.
- Pastors in each congregation had the practical autonomy as to who is or is not welcome to receive the sacraments of baptism and holy communion or to participate in worship services.
- For a number of years now black and white pastors have been participating together in pastoral retreats, in which they have the opportunity to have Bible studies, pray together and discuss meaningful joint diaconic programs in such cities as Cape Town.
- Since the last LWF delegation visited South Africa in 1989, the ELCSA-CC has made yet another statement with respect to unity. From the discussions with Bishop Rohwer and his delegation, we got the impression that unity talks among the participating churches in South Africa have reached a stage where the question of dates is being discussed, i.e. the date when the foreseen united Lutheran church will be founded. The political changes in the country are an important factor to be borne in mind.

(See Appendix 1 for the ELCSA-CC's latest statement on unity.)

Cape Town: Moravian Church

We met with the president of the Moravian Church, the Rev. Martin Wessels, who gave an overview of how the Moravians in the Cape have worked in close cooperation with the ELCSA-CC. He made positive comments about the experiences they have had together, but as they have no plans to unite, unity is not an issue for them. He commented positively about the openness of the ELCSA-CC and confirmed the fact that the retreats and joint urban mission programs were a witness and a rejection of the apartheid situation in South Africa.

Johannesburg: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

The meeting was attended by the presiding bishop, Bishop Solomon E. Serote, Bishops Manas Buthelezi and Richard Schiele, Dean Thomas Mbuli (general secretary), and the Property Management Committee director.

They provided an overview of the current events in South Africa and commented on the status of the unity discussions between the ELCSA, ELCSA-CC and ELCSA-N-T.

The following was stated:

- Thanks to the LWF for making available financial assistance for the unity process in South Africa.
- Through the assistance of the LWF three lawyers have been engaged in drafting the constitution for the envisaged united Lutheran church in South Africa. These lawyers were: Professor Majola of the University of the North; Dr. Dummmler, EKD; and Mr. Wustrow, South Africa. The ELCSA leadership was of the opinion that the process has reached a very advanced stage, a point which is reflected in Bishop Rohwer's report to the synod of his church, which met in Stutterheim, 19-21 April 1991 (*see Appendix 2*).
- The Rev. Magabo, a black pastor in the ELCSA, is serving a vacant white congregation in the Transvaal. The congregation has welcomed him and there are no problems. In this connection, it has to be said that there are black South Africans who worship and hold membership in some of the white German-speaking Lutheran congregations.
- Bishop Serote, ELCSA presiding bishop, officiated at the installation of the newly elected Präses (president) of the ELCSA-N-T. It is important to note that a black bishop has never installed the Präses of one of these German Lutheran churches in the history of the Lutheran churches ELCSA-CC, ELCSA-N-T and ELCSA (black). This particular installation is seen in the context of a South Africa that has been torn by apartheid and the history of inter-Lutheran relations, which have been affected by the same ideology. Therefore, it is viewed as a positive event and as a concrete example of the seriousness with which these Lutheran churches are engaged in unity talks, as mentioned earlier.
- The black and German-speaking Lutheran churches embarked three to four years ago on the construction of common headquarters. These premises are now completed and in use. Staff of these churches work here and share the same facilities. We were informed of the positive working atmosphere in the house.
- The joint theological education program in Pietermaritzburg, where black and white theological students are being trained together for a new united Lutheran church in South Africa is, again, a witness to the desire for unity among those churches involved. The students have a common residence.
- When asked whether or not the suspension should be lifted, the ELCSA stated that it would see no reason why the suspension should not be lifted if the LWF, in its judgment, finds it appropriate to do so, given the developments that have taken place up to now.

OBSERVATION

South African President Frederik W. de Klerk has ushered in reforms and changes that could not have been imagined four years ago. Most of the cornerstones of apartheid are either legally removed or are on the way to being removed. At the point of writing the report, the question of political prisoners was of great concern. We are fully aware that the removal of racial laws from the statutory books does not in any way guarantee that racism is over. Nonetheless, we want to observe that the legal basis and framework for apartheid are certainly being removed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given all that has been said earlier about the discussions since Budapest, the unity talks, common pastoral retreats, the joint theological education program in Pietermaritzburg, common headquarters, the statement about unity by the ELCSA-CC, and so on, staff recommends that:

the suspension of the membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) in the Lutheran World Federation be lifted.

This recommendation is based also on the fact that the ELCSA-CC has joined other LWF member churches, including the ELCSA, in a new umbrella organization, Lutheran Communion [of Churches] in Southern Africa (LUCSA) that was founded in May 1991 (*see Appendix 3*).

NAMIBIA

Okahandja: German Evangelical Lutheran Church (DELK)

DELK was represented by the following:

Rev. Josua von Grottberg
Rev. Dietrich Jaedicke
Mr. Dieter Esslinger (synod president)

Präses Karl Sundermeier was traveling in Germany at the time. From the discussions we learned that:

- the church council of DELK is eager to resume contact with the two black Lutheran churches in Namibia to discuss unity. DELK's position is stated clearly in the minutes of the synod that was held 11-14 May 1989 (*see Appendix 4*);
- their withdrawal from the CCN was an unfortunate decision which is very much regretted. This has been communicated to the CCN directly;
- a meeting between DELK and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) was scheduled for May 14 to discuss areas of concern with the hope that obstacles on the way to unity discussions could be removed.

(A statement from this meeting is attached as Appendix 5.)

Windhoek: Discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia

Bishops Hendrik Frederik and Kleopas Dumeni were each accompanied by high-level delegations consisting of deans, general secretaries, church council members and other senior staff persons from their offices. Both delegations regretted that since the visit of the LWF pastoral delegation in 1989 there had not been unity discussions. The UELCSWA, the structure that brought the three churches together, ceased to function when the ELCRN suspended its membership as a reaction to DELK's withdrawal from the CCN. The ELCRN stressed the need for DELK to give reasons before resumption of the unity talks. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) declared its willingness to enter into unity talks with the other two churches without conditions. The ELCRN informed the staff team that since 1984 it had been concerned with pastoral care for the DELK. The May 14 declaration between the two churches is a manifestation of this concern.

There was a long discussion about the DELK's withdrawal from the CCN and the consequences of that action. The ELCRN explained the position as follows: that if DELK was not willing to be part of an ecumenical council, they found it incongruous to come together within the UELCSWA. However, this position seems now to have been overtaken by events. Reference is hereby made to the statement signed by Sundermeier and Frederik. The LWF delegation observed that the political ideology, apartheid, which constituted or precipitated the *status confessionis* situation, was no longer a problem in Namibia. Namibia's independence has ushered in a new environment that is different from that in the Republic of South Africa. Therefore, it would be of no value for DELK to publicly denounce apartheid in Namibia today, when that situation does not exist.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given all that has been said about the DELK synodical declarations with regard to unity, its willingness to reapply for membership in the CCN, and the May 14 statement between the ELCRN and DELK, and the independence of Namibia, staff recommends that:

the suspension of the membership of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (Namibia) in the Lutheran World Federation be lifted.

We want to base this recommendation also on the fact that the DELK has joined together with other LWF member churches, including the ELCRN and ELCIN, in a new umbrella organization, Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) that was founded in May 1991 (*see Appendix 3*).

Anza Lema
Associate General Secretary

Ishmael Noko, Director
Department for Mission and Development

APPENDIX 1

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Synod Meeting of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church)
April 1991

Report on Unity

The chairman invites discussion on the report. Dr. Wittenberg proposed that "after having heard the report presented by the Präses (president) on the progress made concerning unity between ELCSA-CC, ELCSA-N-T and ELCSA, Synod requests ELCSA-CC to continue unity discussions as put forward by the constitutional panel accepting the basic ideas of forming a united Lutheran church in southern Africa, possibly made up of nine dioceses, where the emphasis is put on the life in the congregation and the easy interaction between the congregation and the diocese. Synod in this regard points to the suggestions as were put forward at Synod." This proposal was seconded by Pastor Becker and unanimously approved by Synod.

The adoption of the report was proposed by Schulz, seconded by Rust and was unanimously adopted.

APPENDIX 2

Program Committee for Mission and Development First Ordinary Meeting of the Eighth Synod 1991 - Stutterheim

Report on the Progress toward Greater Structural Unity between: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA); Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal) (ELCSA-N-T); and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) (ELCSA-CC)

When the Cape Church in its present form was founded in 1961 it gave itself the name: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church). Article I of our constitution already explains why it gave itself such an all-encompassing name. It reads:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) is an association of Lutheran congregations in southern Africa, mainly of German origin, which, with a view to one future Lutheran church in southern Africa, are called to make joint profession and to act in uniformity.

At various synods we have again and again explicitly stated that we will strive toward one Lutheran church in southern Africa. I have also given our reason for working toward one Lutheran church.

It is important that we try to find a structure on which we can all agree so that when we speak of our fellow Lutherans in this country, we do not always speak about "they and we" or "them and us," and that it is visible to all that we belong together.

Attempts at achieving greater unity between these churches have been made for many years. I could go into the history and inform you of these attempts and try to explain why they failed, but that would not really contribute much.

This report deals mainly with the efforts of the three above-mentioned churches to bring about such a structure since 1985 when we started anew and founded the Unity Committee which has in the meantime met thirteen times. In addition to these meetings, there have been two "Joint Church Council Meetings" and meetings between Bishop Serote, Präses Müller-Nedebock and Präses Rohwer.

We are grateful to the various donors who have through their financial assistance enabled us to cover the costs of the traveling involved.

The Unity Committee had four subcommittees working on:

- constitutional matters
- legal and contractual matters
- financial matters
- living out unity

Over the years we have learned to understand the differences in our church structures, the difficulties in obtaining more uniformity especially in matters pertaining to finances and the fears and expectations of the various bodies concerned. We have learned to accept each other without necessarily agreeing with one another. This was a long-drawn-out process with often very little visible progress. At various synods we had to report on this process, without being able to have anything concrete on paper to put before Synod.

Finally the Unity Committee decided to appoint a three-man Constitutional Panel to work on a draft constitution. The panel consists of: Dr. Dummmler, Professor Majola and Mr. Wustrow.

They have worked through all the paper that the Unity Committee has produced up to now and have interviewed the church councils in order to get a picture of what the problems are and what possible solutions can be suggested.

The panel has now presented a draft constitution for scrutiny by the Unity Committee and the respective church councils.

The Unity Committee has agreed to the basic principles as laid down and it "requests the church councils to comment on the constitution and to submit suggestions by the end of April to the Unity Committee. The Unity Committee would discuss these proposals in May and submit a recommendation to the Constitutional Panel, so that they could make improvements as they deem fit into the constitution" (extract from the minutes of the Unity Committee meeting of 20 February 1991).

At the time of writing this report the church council of the Cape Church has not yet had a meeting in which it could discuss the proposals. We have however discussed the draft proposals at Pastors' Conferences (and will also have discussed them at the Pastors' Convocation held directly before the synod).

We have not as yet really had sufficient time to study and discuss these proposals in depth, but we immediately stumbled over various paragraphs which will have to be referred back to the Unity Committee and the Constitutional Panel.

Although we have not had enough time to prepare ourselves and could definitely not go into a detailed analysis of the individual paragraphs, (as that would keep us busy for many days), we would like to already now share some of our thoughts with Synod, as in the last resort it will be Synod that will have to agree to such a constitution, before we can go ahead toward uniting.

Before we, however, start looking at the areas of dissent we should look at the basic idea put forward by the panel.

The basic idea is the following:

A new church consisting of nine dioceses would be constituted of which the present seven dioceses of ELCSA, ELCSA-N-T and ELCSA-CC would be the point of departure.

The emphasis will be on the diocese and the congregation as legal persons.

A new constitution will be drafted which will deal with all the matters common to all dioceses.

Those aspects of church life which cannot yet be dealt with by common agreement, will be dealt with according to the constitutional provisions of the former synod (of for instance the Cape Church) until such time as a common agreement can be found and the constitution of the new church be amended accordingly.

Accordingly the very last, but also very significant article of the proposed constitution presently contains the following two provisions:

1. Those rules and regulations in the constitutions of the three churches referred to in the preamble, which govern aspects that are not dealt with in this Constitution and its bylaws shall remain in operation *mutatis mutandis* until new rules and regulations have been enacted. The same applies to all other church laws and provisions.
2. The existing church structures shall remain in place and functional until and unless replaced.

We are painfully aware of the enormous discrepancy between, for instance, the income (levies etc.) and expenditure (salaries) of ELCSA on the one hand, and the two other churches who are part of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa on the other hand, and we really do not know how that will be overcome.

Similar differences as to the self-responsibility and self-reliance of the congregations and the churches are evident. It has been made quite clear to all participants that our general policy of decentralization of decision-making and executing of decisions has worked very well and that it would be counterproductive for the life of the church if this is reversed. Democracy in itself is not a Christian virtue, but it has a very important function to play also in the church.

Over the past decades we have moved away from the (wrong) concept which one could by exaggeration describe as "the pastor is the congregation" or "the Präses is the church," to a concept of active involvement and joint responsibility of all the members. When the popular slogan "we are the church" is used in our context we in no way want to deny or contradict the truth that "we are the church" only insofar as we are part of the body of Christ.

Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession states:

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain for ever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel....

It is clear that it is not we who "make" the church, but Christ who "makes" the church, but we who are gathered around word and sacrament are the body of Christ in that specific locality.

The structures and offices within the church structures are necessary, but they are not essential (they are not part of the essence). The structures and offices within the structure serve the church and not vice versa. Structures, rules and regulations are changed and adapted to enable us to proclaim the gospel and to administer the sacraments in a given and very often changing situation.

The final question that we will have to ask ourselves is whether the new structure will serve the Lutheran family better than the present structures.

Without going into details I would like to mention some general observations which will again have to be brought to the attention of the Unity Committee and the Constitution Panel.

We believe it to be essential that there is open communication between every member of the church and the leadership of the church and that structures are not seen as a hindrance to this end, but as enabling this important interaction.

The general tendency toward decentralization in all spheres of public life has to be seen in a positive light and is to be taken note of also in the life of the church. People who bear responsibility themselves are people who can best decide what responsibility is to be delegated to another body.

Although church structures are structures that have to be legally defined and decisions taken in an orderly fashion must in the final instance be legally enforceable, the life of the church should be organized in such a way that it is essentially based on mutual consent and voluntary cooperation. As in the case of a state, the legal system and the practice of this system should be seen as enabling life and preventing chaos.

This means that there should be as many rules, and regulations, organizations and bodies as are really necessary, but as few as possible.

We will have to carefully scrutinize all the paragraphs dealing with the role of the individual in the congregation, the role of the congregation in the diocese, and the role of the diocese in the church as a whole and vice versa, to see whether the above said has been properly taken note of.

We have already identified quite a few paragraphs in the draft constitution which will have to be referred back to the Unity Committee and the Constitutional Panel for amendment or further clarification.

We would however not like this criticism to be seen as breaking down what has been suggested, but as constructive amendments. Where we deem an article to be redundant, we will ask for it to be simply left out. Where we deem an article to be unclear or not beneficial to the church, we will try to offer an alternative formulation.

This will be a difficult and time-consuming task, but it is the opinion of the church council that we should go ahead and build on the suggestions as put forward by the panel, accepting the basic idea of forming a church with (say) nine dioceses where the emphasis is put on the life in the congregation and the easy interaction between the congregation and the diocese. The point of departure should be the present structures which will also remain our point of reference wherever no unanimity can be reached in the church body as a whole. In this way we believe we will be making an honest contribution toward uniting the present churches and will be able to reach a stage where the church council can support and submit a draft constitution to our synod for careful scrutiny and acceptance.

Cape Town, 11 April 1991

Präses Nils Rohwer

APPENDIX 3

Statement regarding the

Foundation of a New Cooperative Body of Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa

We, the representatives of the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi

Bishop L.E. Dlamini

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia

Dean J.K. Shanghal, Ms H. Tshilongo-Pauly

Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia

Bishop H. Frederik, Rev. P. Diergaardt

German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia

Landespropst K. Sundermeier

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana

Bishop P.J. Robinson, Ms H.K. Kealeboga

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa,

Presiding Bishop S.E. Serote, Bishop M. Buthelezi

Moravian Church in Southern Africa (Western Region),

Rev. M.J. Wessels, Rev. F. Engel

Moravian Church in Southern Africa (Eastern Region)

Rev. E.M. Ndabambi, Mr. S.S.B. Mazwi

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church)

Bishop N.J. Rohwer

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal),

Präses D.R. Lilje, Rev. F. Graz

are gathered here today at Kempton Park, the 17th day of May 1991 to form and constitute the

LUTHERAN COMMUNION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

(LUCSA)

This organization has the following OBJECTIVES:

1. In Communion with Christ and in obedience to Him to promote Christian fellowship and to support diaconal, mission and ecumenical work.
2. As coordinator of cooperation to act, as instructed by the members from time to time, in all matters of common interest and benefit.
3. To foster reconciliation, promote social and economic justice and human rights and responsibility for creation.
4. To promote stewardship and self-reliance, encourage the sharing of resources and skills within and among the member churches.
5. To co-operate with the Lutheran World Federation.
6. To generally undertake all such tasks and activities deemed necessary to achieve its objectives.

It stands under the following PREAMBLE:

Whereas, in their respective constitutions the participating Lutheran churches acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice, and see in the three Ecumenical Creeds and in the confessional writings of the Lutheran church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, a pure exposition of the word of God;

and whereas, the participating churches are of the conviction that they could and should cooperate in closer communion to further the Lutheran witness by cooperating in matters of common interest and responsibility;

now therefore, the participating churches do hereby establish and undertake to maintain an association governed by the following constitution.

It has the following NATURE:

1. The nature of "LUCSA" is a voluntary association of autonomous and independently constituted Lutheran churches in the southern African region.
2. LUCSA shall only act as any member's agent if specifically called upon so to do. It shall not exercise a churchly function as such nor legislate for or prescribe to any of its members.
3. LUCSA is a legal persona, unaffected in its status by any change in membership.
4. The liability of the members of LUCSA is limited to the extent of outstanding obligations.

It defines as follows the MEMBERSHIP:

1. The members shall be the constituent churches who have adopted this constitution.
2. A church in southern Africa, which subscribes to the Lutheran Confession as described in the preamble, may be admitted as a member upon acceptance of written application by a majority vote taken at the General Conference immediately following the date of such application or in the interim by the Executive, subject to confirmation by the General Conference.

It functions through the following ORGANIZATION:

LUCSA shall exercise its function through the General Conference, the Executive, the Officers and the Executive Director.

The Constituting General Conference, as gathered here today, calls upon its member churches and the worldwide Lutheran family to strengthen LUCSA by prayer and cooperation.

Rev. M. Wessels, President

Rev. F. Graz, Executive Director

APPENDIX 4

Declaration of the DELK Synod, 11-14 May 1989 (Translation)

The Synod of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in South-West Africa (DELK) has repeatedly declared that our church continues imperturbably toward *one* Lutheran church.

Moreover, it has a fundamental interest in communion with other churches in our country. Unity reached through common witness among Lutheran churches leads also toward ecumenical community

- because we are together in the mission of our Lord with these other churches;
- because the invisible *one* Church of Jesus Christ on earth must find its visible expression among us;
- because we are confronted with big diaconic tasks which can only be mastered jointly;
- because a common future in the peace of God for all people of our nation can only be shaped jointly and in mutual respect.

Therefore, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church intends to assist in the removal of obstacles which hinder the unity of the churches.

APPENDIX 5

Statement

On 14 May 1991 the two church boards of the ELCRN and the DELK met to discuss the future cooperation of the two churches. This meeting was organized on a decision of the synod of the ELCRN taken in September 1989. The problems and difficulties were put forward in a good Christian spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ unites his church, forgiving our trespasses, as we forgive one another. The meeting decided to encourage the congregations to seek ways of new cooperation and fellowship. We will respect and accept one another and work together. The two church boards will nominate a committee to deal with questions that may arise and to seek further steps of cooperation.

May our Lord bless these decisions as a beginning of a new relationship between our churches on their way to unity.

Dr. H. Frederik
Bishop of the ELCRN

Karl Sundermeier
Landespropst of the DELK

Windhoek, 14 May 1991

Confessional Integrity

Remarks by the LWF General Secretary

Dr. Gunnar Staalsett

It was seven years ago that the member churches gathered in Assembly in Budapest. That Assembly will be remembered as a turning point in our understanding of ourselves as a communion of Lutheran churches around the world. It will be remembered for our historic action acknowledging the fact that the member churches of the LWF are in "pulpit and altar fellowship" with each other. It is this *koinonia* of word and sacrament which is the primary expression of the ties which bind us together to the body of Christ, the church, to our confessional heritage and to one another.

There was another action taken by the Budapest Assembly which though exceedingly difficult—even painful—also expressed the nature of this communion and which intended to strengthen ties of faith and life. I refer to the decision to suspend two member churches from membership in the LWF.

Those of you who were present in Budapest will remember the discussion of this issue. At the heart of the debate, as the report of the staff team to the general secretary indicates, was the question of the integrity of our being as a Lutheran confessional family.

A primary point of reference for the debate was the recommendation of the Dar Es Salaam Assembly of 1977 on *status confessionis*. Essentially, that recommendation said that the system of legalized racism known as apartheid, which divides both church and society on the basis of skin color, is incompatible with our belonging to the church of Christ, incompatible with participation in the Lutheran confessional heritage and, thus, incompatible with membership in the LWF. Apartheid must be rejected by Lutherans, not only because it contradicts principles of human dignity, human rights, and justice and equality, but because it contradicts our faith in Jesus Christ and the unity to which that faith constrains us.

What we were saying is that our participation in the communion of the LWF obligates us not only to confess the historical faith in our statements, but also in a life lived concretely in the world. We were saying that we must live out—across lines of race and color—the unity which we confess.

Those present in Budapest will also remember the context in which the suspension question was dealt with. This is important to note because it also says something about the nature and style of our life as a communion. It was a very solemn session which began with prayer. For the next two hours there was a lively and often emotional debate on many aspects of this issue. At times the discussion was extremely difficult.

Some of you in this room will remember when the vote was taken. There was no applause. There was no celebrating by those whose views had prevailed. Rather there was silence. We sang a hymn. Not one of triumph or joy. Rather "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir, Herr Gott" ("Out of the Depths I Cry to You").

Since that day in Budapest the seriousness of this issue has remained with us constantly. I can tell you for a fact that since that time it has been a highest priority of the LWF to work and pray for that day when the general secretary could stand before the Assembly or Council and recommend the lifting of the suspension action.

The excellent report of Dr. Anza Lema and Dr. Ishmael Noko which you have before you indicates a few of the ways in which we have sought to be faithful to the resolutions of Budapest. I say "resolutions," not only to refer to the much publicized action on suspension, but to draw attention to the dozen accompanying actions from Budapest which called on the member churches to affirm our unity in Christ and bring an end to the racism which destroys their own life.

I will not hide the fact that the road has been long and difficult. The suspended churches have sometimes felt that we have forgotten or disowned them. At times they felt that we were increasing the burden by adding new conditions to the ones laid down in Budapest, something we had no intention of doing. Some members in the primarily black churches, on the other hand, have sometimes felt that we have not supported them enough in their struggle to bring an end to racism and apartheid. In the front line of the struggle, they have felt "in their body" the marks of racist oppression on a daily basis.

I have in my report indicated the direction of my recommendation, namely to lift the suspension. This recommendation has been referred to the Program Committee for Mission and Development. I would, therefore, ask you, Mr. President, to invite the chairperson of that committee to present the report.

In agreement with the recommendations of the Program Committee for Mission and Development, I RECOMMEND that:

the suspension of the membership in the Lutheran World Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church) be lifted; and

the suspension of the membership in the Lutheran World Federation of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (Namibia) be lifted.

